ASNE Institute Assignment #3

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Lesson: Story Idea Treasure Hunt

Overview and Rationale

Developing good strong, unique story ideas requires the power of observation, critical thinking and a game plan for story development. This series of lessons helps students use accessible resources to find and develop good story ideas. Students discover how readily-available resources on campus become story ideas with a little attention and teamwork.

Goals for Understanding:

Essential Questions
- Where can we find stories all around us?
- How can the same place/source/topic/issue generate multiple story ideas?
- How can we give a story idea sufficient structure to launch the interview and drafting process?

Critical Engagement Questions:
- How can our physical campus inspire story ideas?
- What story ideas from the local/national/world news can we localize?
- How can we use technology and social media–Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and others, to find trends that can be turned into stories?
- How can we identify the appropriate sources for thoroughly covering a topic? (see Common Core Standards at end of document)

Resources/Materials (List all materials/audio-visual needs.):
- Reporters notebooks and pens
- Internet access on computers, iPads or phones
- Cooperation from staff at school and district office—Principal, VPs, bookkeeper, librarian, food service, athletic director, superintendent, director of personnel, director of facilities

Overviews and Timeline:

Activity 1 (One 50-minute class)

* "Into" experience? (10 minutes)
> Round one: Students take out their reporters notebook and, without talking to anyone, write a list of stories they could write about their day so far that might be published in our newspaper.
> Share: After 60 seconds, say "stop!" ask students to share some of their ideas. Ask them what made that activity challenging.
> Round two: Have an object or poster or article and ask them to try again, not talking to anyone, for 60 seconds, to come up with ideas about that thing.
> Share: Who had an idea? Share a few? Was this easier? Why?
> Round three: have another object, poster or article and have students work in groups of three to come up with story ideas for 60 seconds.
> Debrief: hear some ideas and about how the group interaction facilitated brainstorming. Expected takeaway: when you have something to inspire thinking and a team of people, you will come up with

more and better ideas

* Treasure hunt (40 minutes, including instructions, activity, debrief and follow up homework)
      Instructions: in groups of 4-6 (assigned), you will go on a story ideas treasure hunt. Follow the instructions you get (sample attached) for where to go and who to talk to. Make sure you do it in the order on the instructions. Everyone in the group should write down all the ideas. Come back to our classroom in 30 minutes
      Teams depart to visit assigned places on campus

* Debrief about the process (not the content) when they return

* Homework: on your own, or with someone in this class, find an activity or place or online resource that sparks at least five more story ideas. Add them to the list you started today and bring them tomorrow

Activity 2 (One 50-minute class)

* Warm up (5 minutes)—in yesterday's treasure hunt groups, share the ideas you wrote for homework

* Treasure hunt, second round (25 minutes)—each team has another place to go to practice coming up with story ideas (some are places other groups went the previous day, to allow comparison later). Return to class for discussion

* Class discussion (15 minutes)—comparing ideas from the same place—how did the places you visited on campus inspire different types of story ideas? Groups pair up to discuss

* Homework (2-minute explanation)—select your five most interesting story ideas. They can be from the list your team came up with, last night's homework or a combination

Activity 3 (One 50-minute class)—turning story ideas into a research roadmap

* Warm up (10 minutes)—in treasure hunt teams, share the five stories you picked; organize your group so that everyone is paired with someone who chose one of the same story ideas

* Roadmapping Mini-lesson (15 minutes) with examples on roadmapping the story idea to include:

  • Context—what makes this story relevant to our audience? Give some background and rationale
  • Type of article—news, opinion, feature, humor?
  • Sources needed to cover the topic thoroughly—online, expert, student-on-the-street, polling?
  • Possible sidebars
  • Graphic or photo possibilities
  • Connection to web

* Partner work (10 minutes)—pairs work to roadmap the story they have in common

* Small group share (10 minutes)—hear the full roadmap of a story idea from each pair in the small groups

* Homework—roadmap your other four ideas; submit them to the Googledoc, putting yourself on the list in

alphabetical order by last name; bring a hard copy of your roadmapped ideas to our next class

Assessment:

Students give their top five completed story ideas and roadmaps a score using the guide (attached). Assessment can be done as an in-class activity and students can either assess their own ideas or trade papers with another student to do the assessment, then discuss with each other their results.

References Recommended:
1. class handbook on use of Googledocs
2. school map
3. school staff list

Relevant Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Treasure hunt for story ideas—Instructions for Group 1

First step: go to the library; spread out and silently observe in different places—what are students doing? What do you see set up at the library? What kind of technology is in use?—write down everything you see for 5 minutes. Meet up together and find a place where you can share what you saw with each other. Brainstorm possible story ideas based on your observations. Everyone should write down all the ideas, even if you don't think they would necessarily make a good story.

Second step: ask the librarian to come join your conversation for the next five minutes (she is expecting you to do this); ask her what is new at the library this year, what plans she has for how the library will serve the school community, what kinds of projects she is working on, what challenges she feels the library is facing, what she thinks you should write about that concerns the library (or any other topic) and anything else you think of to ask; take notes on all her responses; thank her for talking with you. After she leaves, brainstorm a few more possible story ideas—be sure to write them all down.

Return to our classroom at 8:50

Treasure hunt for story ideas—Instructions for Group 2

First step: get all group members onto a device, preferably computers, but can be phones. Go visit all your usual social media—Facebook, Twitter, Instagram—and write down anything notable. Examples might include: a topic from the national or local news that at least three people are talking about, preparations for an event coming up at school, styles you notice in photos, trends in activities, people at our school doing something unusual/interesting. Be an observer and see what you notice. Even if you are not sure how to make your observations into stories, write down what you see.

Second step: meet up with the whole team.
- One by one (no interrupting!) share your observations.
- Use a whiteboard to go back and identify some commonalities. If several of you noticed a fashion trend, for example, there could be a story there.
- Turn your data into story ideas. Examples: A People article on ____, ____ and ____ who all tried a new water sport this summer. An Opinions piece about student reactions to the trial of George Zimmerman and why students care about something that happened in Florida. A Features piece on new fall fashion.
- All group members write all story ideas in reporters notebooks.

Return to our classroom at 8:50

Story Idea Assessment Guide—use as a checklist to make sure you have a complete story idea

An excellent story idea contains all of the following elements:

□ Title of story idea, include what section the article might be in
□ Context that explains the origin of the story
□ Context that gives a rationale for why our readers might care about it
□ Questions the writer will need to answer in order to fully cover the topic
□ Sources needed to provide background information, data or facts about the topic
□ Sources to interview (by name if possible) for information and/or opinion
□ Possibilities for sidebars that give another layer to the article
□ Ideas for graphical elements or photos that should accompany the story
□ Ideas for connecting the story to web (eg: additional photos, more responses to a WOTS question, etc.)

Example story idea write up:

Trends feature: Teens and cooking (or baking or both); People section
Ask a student at our school what he or she likes to watch on TV and don't be surprised to hear, among their favorites, *The Food Network*. Find some of your classmates who have become avid home bakers or chefs and interview them to find out—how they got their start, what they love about baking or cooking, how these activities compare to other high tech hobbies such as playing video games or spending time on Facebook, and what their goals are as bakers or chefs. Find out who these students cook or bake for and interview these "test tasters" too; there may be a fun anecdote there about your featured people. Sidebars possibilities include the student cook/bakers' original recipes and links to the best cooking shows on TV and YouTube. Lots of photo opportunities here—make sure you find a baker/chef who will allow you to observe an entire cooking project. Ask some of your interview questions during the project, bring along a video camera and create a short film for our website. Add a QR code to the article so that readers can easily get there.